

NOAH'S ARK IN THE BELLY OF THE JONAH

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Critical wildlife habitat in high elevation rangeland and sagebrush ecosystems of southwest Wyoming is threatened by energy development and residential sprawl. In October 2005, 72 entries of 50 native species were drill-seeded on a well-pad site in a randomized complete block design with four replications. Also, two seed mixtures were broadcast- and drill-seeded, and one seed mixture was hydro-seeded on disturbed areas adjacent to the plots. In 2007, the highest density counts in the replicated plots were 'Sodar' streambank wheatgrass, L-46 basin wildrye, Copperhead slender wheatgrass, Rocky Mountain beeplant, yarrow, 'Appar' blue flax, Richfield Eaton's penstemon, 'Wytana' and Snake River Plains fourwing saltbush, and Open Range and Northern Cold Desert winterfat. The Bridger and Shell mixture plant densities were greater in the broadcast seeding treatments than in drill-seeded plots. The two previous hydro-seeding attempts failed. Low precipitation and high temperatures may have reduced establishment. In October 2006, 25 shrub species were mechanically planted in replicated plots at a second location. Density counts taken in 2007 revealed extremely poor establishment and the site will be re-seeded in the fall of 2009. Land managers continue to struggle with ameliorating the severe impacts on natural resources. At the same time, residents in surrounding communities wrestle with mounting socio-economic issues such as a decline in air quality, transient population expansion, overall employee shortage, increased demand on medical facilities, inadequate child care, an overburdened service industry, and many more fundamental facets of everyday life.